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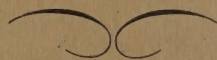
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HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

of

WOODBIDGE METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Compiled in Conjunction with the

100th Anniversary

of the

Dedication of the First Church

in September, 1832

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HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

of

WOODBIDGE METHODIST

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

WOODBIDGE, NEW JERSEY

1832

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HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

By REV. FLETCHER S. GARISS

One hundred years ago in the town of Woodbridge, N. J. there was a number of people who had been influenced by the spirit of our Lord and Master to try to promote His Kingdom.

They understood as we understand that the Kingdom of God is to be promoted by the organization of societies by which the word of God shall be preached. These consecrated men and women of whom none are with us have joined The Church triumphant. Many of their names will be found recorded in this History.

It is with great pleasure that the writer takes up the task, considering it an honor not only to do the writing, but the honor of being pastor at this time in the history of the Church.

There are some most interesting facts recorded in this history. We are sure that you will read it, that you will cherish it and keep it for future reference.

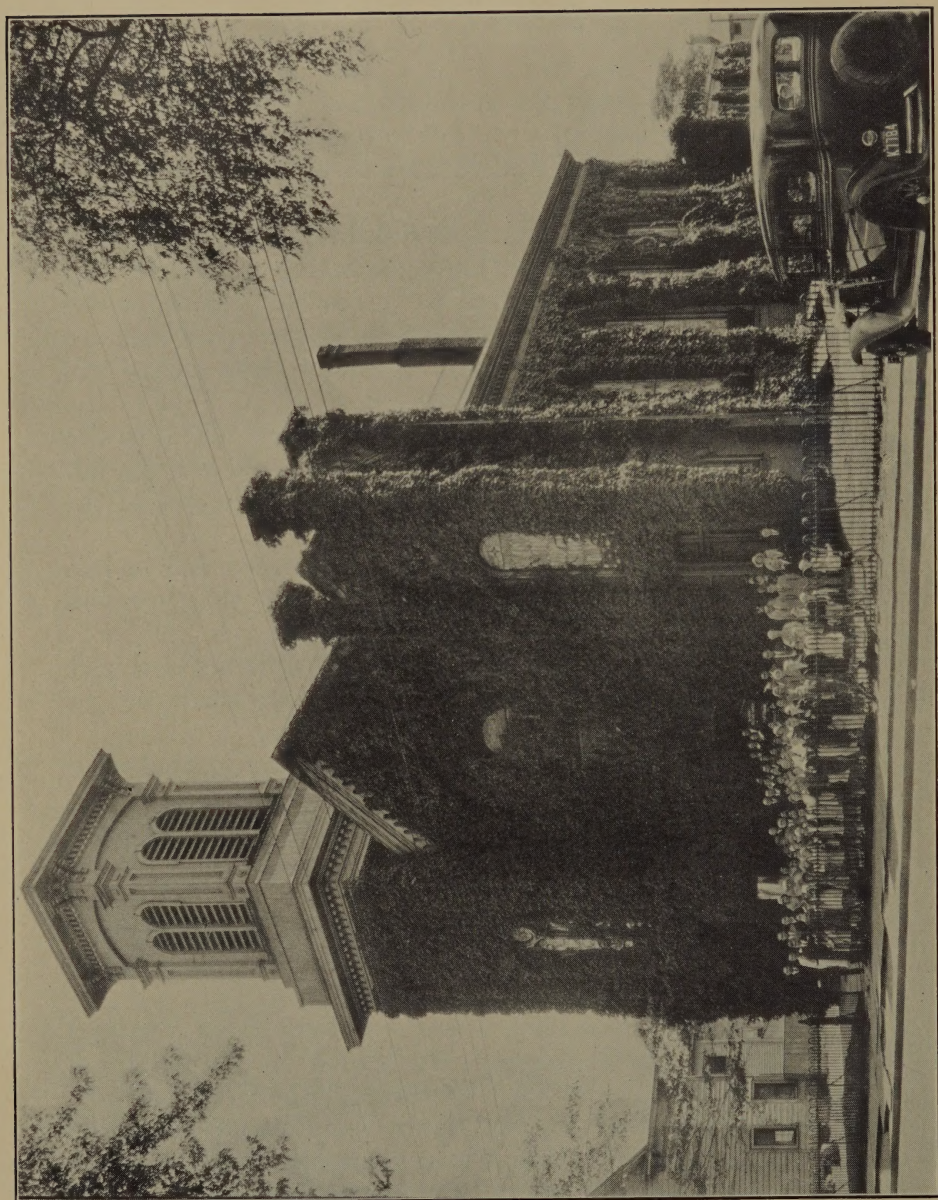
This foreword having been written we now proceed with the facts as we have found them in the records of the Church.

The first Methodist Episcopal sermon was preached at 10 o'clock on Monday morning, April 23, 1740. It was preached by Rev. George Whitefield. You will observe that was 192 years ago. George Washington had passed his eighth birthday.

The second Methodist preacher to arrive in Woodbridge was Joseph Pilmoor, one of the two missionaries sent to America by John Wesley.

John Wesley sent Rev. Francis Asbury from England to preach in the Colonies. He landed in Philadelphia October 27, 1771. On his way through the State of New Jersey to New York he met Peter Van Pelt, of Rossville, Staten Island, who invited him to his home where he found shelter and food and where he preached the gospel to the neighbors and friends of his host.

Thus Methodism was introduced into Staten Island. From there it spread in an organized form through this



part of New Jersey. In Asbury's Journal we find the following: "I preached at Elizabethtown September 4, 1792. From thence I pursued my journey through Woodbridge to Brunswick. The weather was warm, the roads dusty and our journey long. We reached Milfordtown in the evening." Again Friday, June 14th, 1799, he writes: "Rode to Mr. Drake's near Amboy." From this man came the Drake descendants of this and other nearby communities. Space will not permit of giving any more of the facts of Asbury's Journal. The facts show how Methodism came into this part of the country in those early days. Organizations of Methodist societies began to spring up all around this region.

The circuit riders were busy going from town to town. The first annual conference of Methodist preachers was held in Philadelphia in June, 1773. Two preachers were appointed to New Jersey, namely John King and William Walters.

In 1783 New Jersey reported 1,028 members. Six ministers were appointed to the circuits of this State, West Jersey and East Jersey. In the course of time the country was divided into districts and Presiding Elders and Preachers were placed in charge.

According to the records great revivals took place at Rahway, Morristown and New Providence. In 1827 Rahway was made a station with Thomas B. Sargent as pastor. In 1832 Rev. William Granville was appointed to labor for the establishments of a Church at Woodbridge. Soon after the Annual Conference the movement started.

Rev. William Granville called those who desired to form themselves into a society and meeting the requirements of the law of the State the Society was formed and called The Methodist Episcopal Church of Woodbridge. Nathan Harnard was chosen president of the Board of Trustees. It was decided to build a meeting house. The plans of Rev. William Granville for the building were accepted. William G. Inslee gave the lot. A building committee composed of Isaac Felch, Nathan Harnard, Samuel Gage and Harminius Barcelou was appointed. Mr. Isaac Prall was hired to superintend the building of it.

On July 3rd, 1832, Rev. Charles Pitman, Presiding Elder, preached a sermon. The frame of the building was

raised. The trustees borrowed \$500 to meet the deficit on the building. The building was 35x50 ft. It was a plain, modest structure without ornamentation and cost \$1,480.86, exclusive of furniture. The highest subscription paid was \$100. There was \$50, one for \$30 and three for \$25 and eighty-five separate credits.

The dedication took place on September 8, 1832. Rev. William Grenville read the scripture and Rev. R. Gerry preached the sermon from the text Psalm 27: 4, 5, followed by prayer by Rev. A. Leats, of Europe. Rev. J. K. Shaw preached the evening sermon.

We have brought you to the time of the dedication of the first Church. In those days circuits were the common plan of the Methodists. The work of Woodbridge included New Dover, Perth Amboy and Metuchen. The membership of the Woodbridge Church at this time was 25. Rev. J. N. Felsh reported 101 members at the close of 1833. In 1834 Rev. Allen Johns was appointed pastor. He was followed in 1835 by Rev. J. Cunningham. Rev. Isaac Cross came to the Church in 1836. He remained until 1838. During the first year of this pastorate a parsonage was purchased of Edgar Flood. It was purchased October 23rd, 1837. Not meeting the requirements of the Society it was sold January 24, 1842.

The Church building at Perth Amboy was started at a second Quarterly Conference held at Woodbridge February, 27, 1836.

An election of a Board of Trustees for the proposed Church at Perth Amboy was held in May. It resulted in the erection of a small frame edifice which was afterwards replaced by the present brick Church. In the spring of 1838 Rev. W. Hanley was appointed to the circuit. The Church at Perth Amboy severed its relationship from the Woodbridge circuit.

In 1839 Rev. Wesley Robertson arrived on the scene. He remained two years. He was followed by Rev. Curtis Tally. It was during this pastorate in 1842 that a parsonage was built. The lot was donated by James Valentine. The house, no longer a parsonage, is located at 99 Main Street and is owned and occupied by Mr. Horace Drake.

In 1843 Rev. L. Mulford was appointed to the charge. He remained to the spring of 1844. The Church received

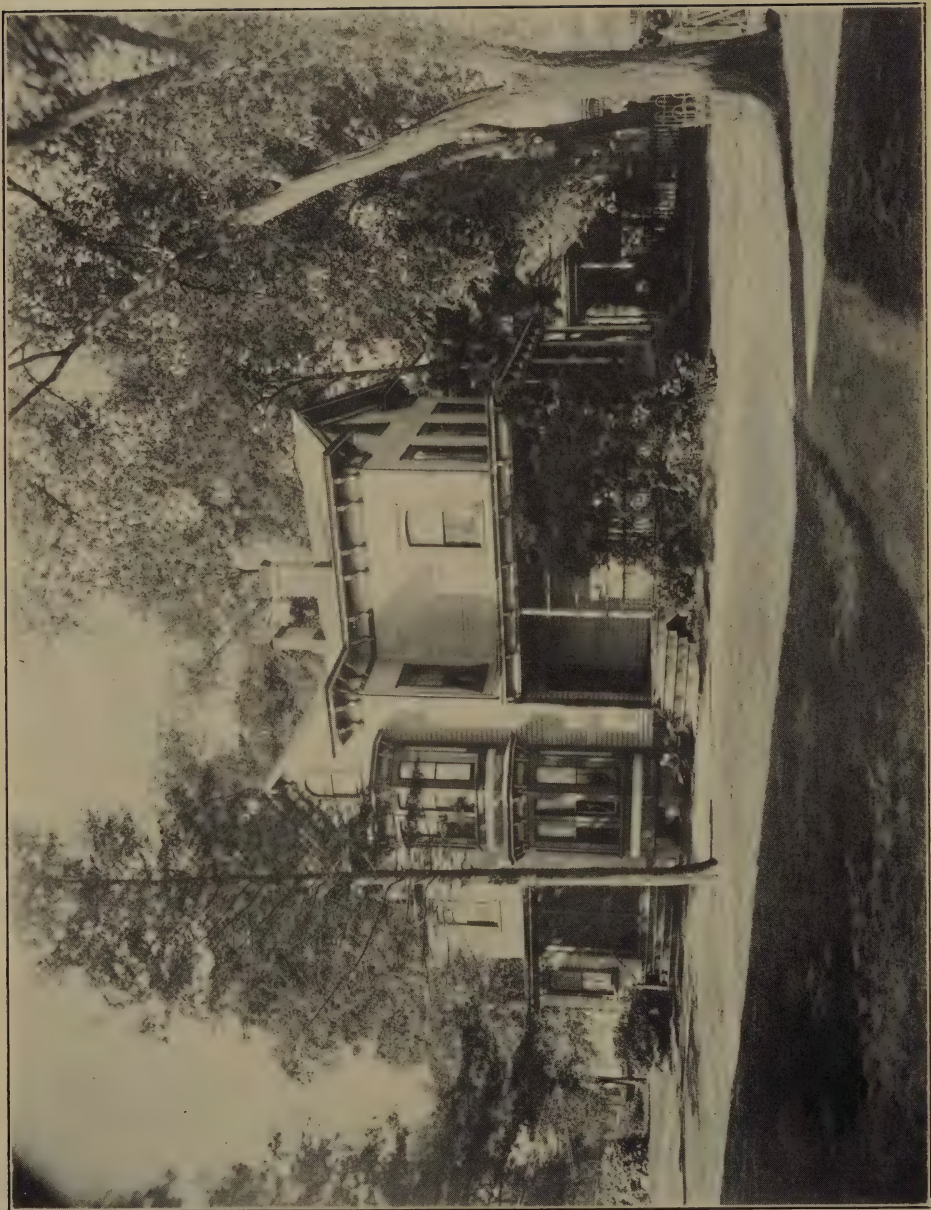
Rev. Edmund Hance who remained for two years, 1845 and 1846. He was followed by Rev. William Wilmer. He served until 1848. The Church continued to prosper under the able pastorate of Rev. H. Trumbower for the next two years. The preachers came and went as Methodist preachers do. The following preachers served the Church from 1850 to 1860: Rev. Abraham Owens, 1850-1851; Rev. J. H. Dandy, 1852-1853; Rev. David Graves, 1854-1855; Rev. R. Winans served one year, 1856. Rev. J. W. Barrett arrived in 1857. He remained two years. Rev. R. S. Arndt followed with one year's service.

Rev. Henry A. Buttz honored the Church in his early ministry by giving two years' service from 1860-1861. The name Henry Anson Buttz afterwards became a household name in the homes of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in both this country and in many lands of the earth.

For many years he was the honored President of Drew Theological Seminary located at Madison, N. J. Many are the men in the ministry of the Church who rise up and call him blessed. Among them the Pastor of this Church, whose birthplace was very near to that of his beloved teacher. His help and influence were greatly appreciated while a student at the Seminary.

During the years 1862 to 1864 Rev. E. W. Adams served the Church. In 1864 Rev. H. Brown became pastor. He remained until 1865. During this pastorate with the help of Rev. E. W. Adams a successful revival was held in a school house near Metuchen in 1864. The work was continued and in 1865 Metuchen was added to Woodbridge and continued a part of the circuit until 1869.

In 1866 Rev. J. S. Coil was appointed. For three years he remained pastor. Rev. J. P. Dailey continued the work. The next pastor was E. M. Griffith. It was during this pastorate that the Church made great advance in its material history. A new Church was built and dedicated. It had its beginning in the mind of the people in 1860. The matter rested during the Civil War of 1861 to 1865. In 1866 the project was revived. In January 1867 a meeting of the congregation was held and a committee was appointed to consider the building of a new Church, consisting of Rev. J. P. Dailey, Samuel Dally and William Harnard.



PARSONAGE

They proceeded to solicit subscriptions for the enterprise. By April 6th, 1868 the subscription amounted to \$15,600. It was decided not to build until \$20,000 was pledged. On Thursday, June 2nd, 1870 the cornerstone was laid amidst great rejoicing.

Rev. R. S. Dashiell preached the sermon in the morning. Rev. Alfred Cookman in the afternoon and Dr. H. A. Buttz in the evening. During the day \$7,000 was subscribed to free the debt of the trustees and enough in the evening to clear the Ladies' Aid Society of their obligation. The Church therefore was dedicated free of debt. The total cost of the Church was \$30,000.

This marked a new epoch in the history of the Woodbridge Methodist Episcopal Church. The passer-by looks at the structure covered with the beautiful ivy and makes the remark: "What a nice Church the Methodists of Woodbridge have for a place of worship." How shall this generation be thankful enough for those faithful men of sixty years ago who gave of their means and ability to plant in this community a Church of which we are justly proud?

A former pastor of the present pastor came to the work in 1872-1874.

There are many books in the present pastor's study given him by this man. I know his service to the Church was good and helpful as it was in every charge of the Newark Annual Conference.

The names and faces of the men who served the Church following Bro. Johns were familiar to the pastor as a young member of the Annual Conference at that time are as follows: Rev. H. B. Lockwood was pastor from 1874 to 1876. Rev. S. J. Morris followed in 1876 to 1879. From 1879 to 1881 Rev. Samuel Mooney had charge. Now comes the Semi-Centennial of the Church: Rev. G. B. Dickison was the pastor. The service was held Sunday, September 24th, 1882. Dr. H. A. Buttz preached at the morning service. At 3:30 p. m. there was a re-union service. Joseph W. Dally read an historical essay. The evening sermon was preached by Dr. Larew. Now comes another important epoch in the history. It was the building of a new parsonage. In the Presiding Elder's report he says that Woodbridge has built and furnished a beautiful parsonage at the cost of \$4,000 and \$1,648 paid on debt. During the pas-



REV. FLETCHER SHAW GARISS, *Pastor*

torate of Rev. A. M. Palmer, from 1886-1887, twenty-five probationers were received. In 1887 to 1890 another interesting epoch in the history of the Church was the building of the Chapel. The cornerstone was laid April 1st, 1888. It was completed during the year at a cost of \$9,000. Rev. S. B. Mooney was the pastor. In 1890 Rev. M. T. Gates came to the Church. Forty-seven were added to the membership and \$250 paid on debt.

In 1892 Rev. E. Meechem was appointed to the charge. The Church was cushioned at a cost of \$300 and \$894 paid on Church debt. Rev. P. G. Blight's pastorate was a great success. The Church was renovated at a cost of \$1,300. His widow, now blind, said to her pastor, who is now pastor of this Church: "When you get to Woodbridge you will see the beautiful ivy on the Church. My husband and I were instrumental in planting it." This pastorate came to a close in 1898. He was followed by Rev. E. N. Crasto. New electric lights were installed during this pastorate. Bro. Crasto remained four years. In 1902 Rev. M. W. Womer was sent to the Church. He was an enthusiastic worker and he soon discovered many things to do. He found that the Church was three score and ten years old. Of course, there should be another anniversary. So there was. It was held October 26th, 27th and 28th. Dr. Enoch Meechem at the morning service. At the evening service all the local Protestant Churches united and participated in the services. Dr. S. T. Upham preached on Monday evening, October 27th. There was a reunion of former pastor and friends. Dr. George W. Smith preached on Tuesday evening, October 28th. During this pastorate repairs to the amount of \$600 were made to the Church and parsonage. There was a revival from which forty-four persons experienced the forgiveness of sins. This pastorate was very successful. Dr. George W. Smith, Presiding Elder, said: "The Church has taken on new life."

In the spring 1904 Rev. M. M. Womer was sent to Bellville, N. J. He was followed by Rev. W. S. McCowan, D.D. This pastorate was very successful. According to the Annual Conference minutes of 1905 the Church paid \$1,000 on debt. \$700 were spent on improvements and paid. Benevolences were in good condition. The above mentioned pastor, a fine cultured Christian gentleman, served the

Church until 1906. He was sent to Trinity Church, Newark, N. J. He will preach at the 100th anniversary October 2nd at 11 o'clock.

Rev. C. F. Hull became pastor in 1906. He was born in New York City April 28, 1842. Died in the parsonage at Woodbridge August 6, 1906. It was a shock to the Church. His going left a great spiritual benediction upon the Church and community.

In November, 1906, Rev. Andrew Henry was appointed to fill the vacancy. Congregations and Sunday School increased in attendance during year.

In the Spring, 1908, Rev. P. H. Murdock was appointed. According to the Annual Conference minutes of 1909 Woodbridge had increased its salary. Twelve memorial windows were placed in the Church edifice at a cost of \$2,145 and \$450 paid on other improvements. The congregations were large and finally at the close of this remarkable pastorate a note of \$1,500 was paid.

Rev. George P. Dougherty followed in the spring of 1910. This year found the debt reduced \$200 and ten had united with the Church. You will notice that Bro. Dougherty's stay was for one year only.

April 1911 Rev. W. C. O'Donnell arrived on the scene. In September of the same year he resigned and finally entered business life. In October of this year, 1911, Rev. J. Fred Bindenberger became pastor and remained to the spring of 1914. His pastorate was very successful. Congregations were good. Young peoples' work took on new life. He will preach at the 100th Anniversary October 2nd at 7:30 p. m.

In the spring of 1914 Rev. John Bovenizer, a classmate of the present pastor, came to the work. I give here with the words from the District Superintendent report, Rev. F. J. Hubach, D. D., of 1915: "The pastor at Woodbridge has had his discouragements. When his hopes ran high for a successful year in liquidating debts and making much needed improvements, down came the ceiling over the pipe organ and up went the steam boiler, necessitating extra expenditures of upwards of \$500. But he smiles and smiles and 'keeps again'. Of course they want him back." He came back. His work was very successful here among the good people of Woodbridge, as it has been wherever he

has served in the Newark Annual Conference. It was with great pleasure that the present pastor, with Mrs. Gariss and Philip, 6 years and Florence, 2 years, came to the parsonage on a visit and preached at an evening service. Bro. Bovenizer will preach at the morning service October 9th, at 11 o'clock.

Rev. Frederick Bloom, Secretary of Newark Annual Conference for many years, was sent to the charge in 1916. It was during this pastorate that the Church made a big increase in salary. It was increased \$500 per annum in the spring of 1918. The fortunate man to receive this result was Rev. L. B. McMickle. During this year the great explosion which wrecked the Gillespie plant at Morgan took place. The Methodist Churches in the vicinity suffered as well as other buildings. Woodbridge Church was among them. It was far-sighted in that it took out explosion insurance just a month or two previous. Bro. McMickle, having served the Church five years, the longest in its history, was sent to Grace Church, Paterson.

Rev. A. S. Dezendorf was appointed in his place. His pastorate was very helpful. The Church grew and prospered, both materially and spiritually. He left in the spring of 1925. Both these pastors died while in the active work and were gathered to their fathers in the Church triumphant.

Rev. M. H. Senior was appointed to the charge. According to the Conference minutes of 1926 the Church increased its membership by 15, its Sunday School by 20. Four thousand, six hundred and twenty-six dollars was paid on improving and beautifying the Church and Chapel. In the spring, 1927, Bro. Senior was sent to St. Luke's Church, Newark, N. J.

Rev. A. B. Fitzgerald was called to the Church. He came in the spring of 1927. During the three years of this pastorate there were increased congregations. Over three score united with the Church. It was a most helpful period in the life of the Church. Dr. Fitzgerald became pastor of First Methodist Episcopal Church, Bayonne, New Jersey, in 1930. He will preach Sunday morning, October 16th, at 11 o'clock.

In 1930 Rev. H. R. Briesch was sent from Cranford, N. J. to the Woodbridge Church. It was the time of the

nation-wide financial depression. It became very serious. It affected every institution and business, especially the Churches of the country felt its effects very seriously. But the pastor and official board were able to close the Church in a very acceptable manner. On account of the depression the salary was reduced. Bro. Briesch will preach at the evening service October 16th, at 7:30 o'clock.

At the Annual Conference held in Newark in April, 1932, the present pastor was transferred from Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, of Paterson, N. J., to Elizabeth District and appointed by Bishop F. J. McConnell, D.D., LL.D., to the Woodbridge Church and Rev. H. Y. Murkland, D.D., was re-appointed District Superintendent.

The pastor preached his first sermon Sunday morning, April 17th. He was entertained at lunch at the home of Mr. George Gordon and his mother, 140 Grove avenue, Woodbridge. At this time in the history of the Church the Official Board during the month of March, 1932, voted to discontinue the evening services. The evening services will be resumed again during the 100th Anniversary.

A large portion of the foregoing history has been devoted to the ministerial side of the life of the Church. But the writer has not failed to keep in mind the laity. There are not many definite facts concerning the personnel of the Church.

It is very reasonable to consider how faithful and trustworthy those men and women of former days were. How they prayed, toiled and sacrificed in order that there might be organized a Methodist Society, a Church of worship built and a parsonage for the home of the pastors and families, so that God's Kingdom might flourish here in Woodbridge, and not here only but in the uttermost part of the world. Who will be ever able to comprehend the influence and spiritual power that have gone forth into the lives of those who have worshiped here and dedicated their lives to holy conversation and living and who have witnessed by word and deed to the redemptive power of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who loved them and gave himself for them?

I am constrained at this time to say that God's chosen ones are here now. There are in our midst some who have gone a long way on the journey and whose lives are a benediction to all. I mention some names who have been mem-

bers of the Church for many years. Miss Agnes McEwen, the oldest member living of those who joined the Society since the building of the second Church. She joined 1872. Mrs. Samuel Anness, Mrs. Edward W. Valentine, Mr. and Mrs. S. B. Potter, Mr. Horace Drake, Mrs. E. C. Ensign, Mrs. M. J. Duvall, Mrs. Elizabeth Drake, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Numbers, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Cronce, Mrs. T. A. Mims, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Mundy.

To all of us who are left to carry on the work there comes a vision of world progress to be made. We get visions for the future by what men have done in the past. We get visions for the future of Christ's Kingdom by what He has done in the past. The world wants spiritual life. It is for us to give it the Christ who said: "I am come that they might have life and they might have it more abundantly."

In the words of Mary Lowe Dickison I bring to a close the Story of Woodbridge Methodist Church for one hundred years.

Old sorrows that sat at the heart's sealed gate
Like sentinels grim and sad.
While out in the night, damp, weary and late,
The King with a gift divinely great,
Waited to make me glad;

Old fears that hung like a changing cloud
Over a sunless day;
Old burdens that kept the spirit bowed,—
Old wrongs that rankled and clamored loud
They have passed like a dream away.

In the world without and the world within
He maketh the old things new;
The touch of sorrow and stain of sin,
Have fled from the gate where the King came in,
From the chill night's damp and dew.

Anew in the heavens the sweet stars shine,
On earth new blossoms spring;
The old life lost in the Life divine,
Thy will be mine, my will is thine,
Is the new song the new hearts sing.

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